

To Sate Their Hunger

"Mirah? Hey, c'mon, Mirah, we gotta get up..."

The little wyvern girl felt her brother gently shake her shoulder. She was too comfy, though, bundled up in her brother's oversized coat... Well, to be accurate, the oversized coat he'd found that someone must have thrown away. It was somewhat tattered, but it kept her warm enough during the night.

"Mmm... just five more minutes, Kitah..." she sleepily protested.

Kitah shook his head. "Nuh uh, Mirah. We gotta get up now, or the plaza won't be busy anymore and we'll miss our chance..."

She still didn't want to, but knew Kitah would be upset if she didn't. "Mmm... okay, *fiiiiine*..."

Seven in the morning. From what Kitah saw, that tended to be when the town square started to get busy. Of course it wasn't the *only* busy hour of the day, but they were gonna need to take advantage of every opportunity to find food or money today. He was more than used to being hungry, but things were getting a little dire... he had to force himself to sleep through the pangs of hunger, having given most of his share of yesterday's food to Mirah. *At least she slept well...* he thought to himself.

No time to complain, though. They had to book it to the plaza and set up for their performance. Maybe today they'd finally get lucky... Kitah felt confident that he could nail the dances S'wari had shown them the last time he was in town. As for Mirah... well, it'd have to do. He knew his sister wasn't into it like he was, but was grateful she at least tried.

When they reached the plaza, it was as he'd hoped. Activity was just starting to pick up, meaning they could still find a good area to perform in. The young wyverns tried to claim the spot S'wari always used, but had to settle for something a couple meters away - good enough.

About fifteen minutes later, as they readied themselves to begin, Kitah felt his confidence begin to waver. Sure, he felt he could dance, but... he was never particularly good with people. He turned nervously to his sister. "H-hey, Mirah... you think you could do the intro speech this time...?"

"Huh? But *you're* the one who has the script memorized, Kitah... I think you should do it! I'll probably just mess it up..."

"B-but... well, okay..." He tried to calm himself... trying to draw people in was always the part he was worst at, but it's not like he had a choice most days.

"H-hello, everyone! I'm Mirah-- no, I'm Kitah, a-and this... this is my sister, Mirah! Umm... w-well..." The young wyvern stammered, his voice so soft and timid that it barely seemed to register to the people passing by. As usual, it didn't really matter that he knew the words to say when he barely had the courage to say them...

"Attention, everyone!" Kitah was suddenly startled by his sister's loud, high-pitched voice. "We're Kitah and Mirah, and today we've got a performance for you all! We've been practicing *suuuper* hard, so please give us a chance!" She successfully grabbed the attention of quite a few passersby, who turned their heads to look at the two young wyverns.

Kitah turned away, embarrassed that his younger sister had to cover for his own shyness yet again. Before he could get any more lost in self-pity, though, he felt Mirah grab his hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze. *Right... I can't forget what we're doing here.* He collected himself, and the two young siblings began their performance.

Mirah wandered into one of the back streets of the city's food district. After their performance, she and her brother had split up to find food. She'd never seen Kitah so dejected before... he'd been excited to finally show off the new routine they'd been practicing all week, only for barely anyone to stick around and watch. Maybe two or three people clapped politely, and someone was kind enough to hand them a copper piece, but that was it...

So, determined to cheer Kitah up, she hunted around the alleyways for whatever food she could find. Hopefully, some vendors might have just thrown away their scraps or extra food they couldn't sell, and it wouldn't have gone bad yet.

After a while of searching - and just a *little* bit of hiding near stores to see if the owners would come out to discard things - she circled back to the bakery. As luck would have it, just as she turned the corner, she spotted the baker throwing something out! It was just a single stale bread roll, but that didn't matter... food was food and she felt her tummy rumble at the sight of it.

As soon as the baker walked back inside and closed the door, she snuck over to the trash to grab her prize. However, she was so focused on taking the bread that she didn't realize someone else had the same idea, until she tried to pick it up and met resistance...

"Hey! I found that first!"

"Huh?"

She turned her head to the voice. Another kid had put his hand on the roll at the exact same time she did. A young wolf, scrawny just like her, but easily at least a foot taller. She guessed he must have been older than Kitah, even. She wasn't scared, though.

"Are you deaf? That's mine! Let go!"

"No way! I found this fair and square, and me and my brother have been working hard so we deserve it!"

"Your brother? Wait, I've seen you before..." The wolf squinted at her for a moment, then laughed. "Oh, you're those stupid dancer kids!"

Mirah felt anger bubbling inside her. "...*Stupid?*"

"Yeah, nobody cares about your stupid dancing! You guys aren't even any go--"

Before she knew it, her fist had already flown towards his face, hitting him squarely on the nose. For a nine year old, Mirah's strikes were surprisingly strong, and he yelped in pain, momentarily letting go of the bread. Taking advantage of the opportunity, she pulled the roll away from him, clutching it close to her chest as she sprinted away.

"Grrrr... Get back here!"

Mirah was a fast runner, racing through the alleyways, dodging and weaving between trash cans, stray cats, and the odd person who happened to be hanging around back there. Still, she couldn't outrun someone that much taller than her, especially not without much of a head start. Eventually, the wolf boy caught up with her and tackled her to the floor. She cried out, pain surging through her knees as they scraped the ground, though she managed to maintain her grip on the bread.

The two kids struggled, the wolf boy using his size advantage to keep the wyvern girl pinned down as she fought to keep him from taking the bread and tried to throw him off. In equal parts anger and desperation, she extended the claws on her free hand and swiped at his face, causing him to recoil in pain, clutching his face. Her scratch hadn't cut too deep, but the very tips of her claws were now tinged with red. Mirah kicked the wolf boy off, leaving him to writhe in pain as she ran away. As she made more and more distance from him she started to feel a little bad for what she did... but those thoughts quickly faded from her mind as she imagined how happy her brother would be once she returned with the food, and she kept running.

"Kitah! Kitah, look! I found food!"

Hearing the voice of his sister, Kitah turned to find her running towards him.

"Oh! That's great, Mirah! What did you find?" He couldn't help but be excited... after all, he'd barely eaten anything the day before, and he'd just been holding on to the apple he'd bought with the copper piece from their performance today, waiting for Mirah to return.

"It's just some bread, and it's kind of hard... but we'll be able to eat today!" She showed him the stale roll she'd found, and Kitah's excitement faded. Sure, any food they could find was great... but one look at it and he knew the food they found today was barely enough to feed either of them, much less both of them.

"Nice, nice... Hey, Mirah, you went through the trouble of finding it... Why don't you take it all? And go ahead and have this, too!" he said, handing her the apple.

"Huh? Are you sure?" Mirah tilted her head. "But... I found this for *us* to share! I wanted to cheer you up, Kitah..."

He smiled. "It's okay, sis... I'm not that hungry right now, anyway." He lied through his teeth, and his tummy rumbled loudly, as if trying to expose him. Mirah didn't seem to notice, though, and her face lit up.

"Well... okay! Thank you, Kitah!" With her brother's blessing, she took the food and began happily scarfing it down. He watched with envy as Mirah ripped chunks off the stale bread with her teeth, and took large bites out of the apple. His empty stomach protested, but seeing his sister happy made it all worth it. And anyway, it was early afternoon... there was still time in the day to find something for himself to eat, surely.

"Hold on..." As he watched Mirah eat, he noticed her scraped knees. "Mirah, you're hurt... What happened? Did you get in a fight again?"

"Oh um... There was this mean wolf boy who tried to take the bread from me when I found it... But I showed him! I don't think he's gonna try to mess with us anymore, hmph!" She recounted the encounter in between bites of food. Kitah shook his head.

"Mirah, I *told* you... please, stop getting into fights like this. You're gonna get in even worse trouble one day, and I don't want anything to happen to you..." He sighed. "...Does it hurt?"

"Nuh uh! I'm fine!" She touched her knees, and winced. "A-ahh! Okay, I guess it hurts a bit..."

"Alright... just come over here and I'll patch you up." Fortunately, since Mirah tended to get into scrapes often, Kitah learned how to bandage her wounds with scraps of cloth, and still had some stashed on him. Being as delicate as possible, he wrapped them around her knees; they didn't look too bad, but some bandaging would protect them and keep the bleeding in check.

"There... better?"

Mirah nodded. "Mhm... Thanks, Kitah, you're the best!"

He gave her a tired smile. He was starting to get dizzy with hunger, and he still wasn't feeling great about having their best performance to date be ignored by most of the townsfolk... but Mirah's constant enthusiasm and energy always kept him going in spite of everything. Speaking of...

"C'mon, Mirah." He got up, and helped Mirah do the same. "There's still time today... maybe we'll be able to find something for dinner tonight."

"Okay!"

The sun was starting to set. The siblings had stuck together in their search for more food, with Kitah wanting to keep a close eye on Mirah and make sure she didn't get in any more trouble. Unfortunately, the afternoon failed to yield anything more for them. That didn't do much to curb Mirah's optimism as she continued to scurry about the city, searching eagerly and pulling her brother along. It seemed like he was lagging behind and moving slower than usual, but she was focused on the hunt for food, so she didn't pay it much mind.

Of course, she had no choice but to notice when Kitah fell to the ground, unconscious.

"Huh? Kitah? Kitah!!"

They had been walking through one of the back alleys, Mirah pulling Kitah along by the hand, when she suddenly felt his arm go slack, followed by the sound of his body hitting the ground. She immediately turned around and knelt by his side, too panicked to register the pain in her wounded knees.

"W-what's wrong? Kitah?!" She tried frantically to shake him awake, but obviously that didn't work... A weak groan left her brother's mouth as she did, though, so at least she knew he wasn't dead. But what happened?

Then she heard an odd rumbling sound. Paying closer attention, it sounded like a stomach growling. Kitah's stomach, to be precise. *But... but he said he wasn't hungry...*

She realized that her brother, in spite of what he told her, had actually been starving the whole time. Thinking back, what else could it be? He'd been giving her most, if not all, of his share of the food for the past few days... if she was getting to eat most of it and still felt hungry, what more Kitah...?

But... it wasn't her fault, right? She never asked him to give her his share... he just did it out of his own accord. She started to tear up as she realized... that was just how much he loved her and cared for her. He was always doing so much to make sure she was happy and safe.. he was even willing to ignore his own needs and go hungry to the point of fainting, just so she could have a little more to eat...

"K-Kitah... you're so dumb..." Her fists balled up. She was upset that she let him sacrifice so much for her like this, and that he would lie to her about what he needed just so she wouldn't feel bad about it. At that moment, she resolved to step up as a little sister... from now on, anything they found would be for *both* of them, no matter how much Kitah insisted. And she swore, she'd learn to read him so well that she could see through all of his "white lies", so he could never get away with hiding his feelings from her like that ever again...

Mirah was brought back to the moment when she felt a stray cat nuzzling her leg. It had black fur, and big yellow eyes, and it seemed to be... comforting her? She wiped her tears and got up... she couldn't do much for Kitah on her own, since he was the one who usually handled this kinda stuff. She had to find help, quickly... but she wasn't gonna find it in a back alley, and she couldn't just leave her brother passed out like this...

The cat meowed, and walked over to Kitah before sitting attentively by his side. Mirah tilted her head quizzically... was it... trying to help by watching over him? She locked eyes with it for a moment, and it seemed as if they magically came to an understanding. It didn't seem like a great idea to leave her brother unconscious, with just a stray cat to look after him... but a strange feeling told her she could trust it, and she ran off to look for help.

It was dinnertime at Dawnhearth, and Kitah and Mirah were sharing a table with Eilun, Rook, and Astar... and Sockrates, of course. They were used to it by now, but everyone other than the wyverns couldn't help but watch in awe as Kitah effortlessly polished off his third steak and fourth bowl of guild soup. Eilun stared adoringly, while Astar mumbled something about the guild's food supply. Rook simply smiled and shook his head, and turned to Mirah. "Where does he get his appetite... Was he always like this?"

The phantom girl's thoughts seemed to be elsewhere as she watched her brother eat, but Rook's inquiry snapped her back to reality. "Oh? Uh, well... no, actually, things were quite different for us back then," she said, thinking back to that day nearly ten years ago. "I guess you could kinda say all this might be like... making up for lost time."

At that, everyone at the table besides Kitah turned to her, curious about her statement. She didn't follow up on it, though. She simply looked back at her brother, who was busy scarfing down the rest of his meal, and smiled.

"He deserves it all."